

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 CIAE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIE-00 INRE-00 ACDA-12 IO-13 AID-05 IGA-02 MCT-01
JUSE-00 HA-05 /088 W
-----119265 212154Z /41

O 212106Z DEC 77
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5375
INFO DIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE
USSOUTHCOM IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 11907

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, MILI, CO
SUBJ: REACTIONS TO MILITARY DECLARATION

REF: BOGOTA 11828

1. SUMMARY. TWENTY FOUR HOURS AFTER THE MILITARY DECLARATION (REFTEL) THE NATIONAL MOOD WAS CALM. THERE WAS REMARKABLY LITTLE ALARM AND ONLY MODERATE REACTION IN PRESS AND PRIVATE COMMENT TO THIS APPARENT CHALLENGE TO PRESIDENT LPEZ. PRELIMINARY INDICATIONS OF LOPEZ' VIEWS ON THE SUBJECTS RAISED IN THE DECLARATION WERE THAT HE WOULD NOT UNDERTAKE MEASURES BEYOND THOSE ALREADY IN FORCE OR ANNOUNCED FOR THE FUTURE. BOTH PRO AND ANTI GOVERNMENT CONSERVATIVE FACTIONS AND CONSERVATIVE CANDIDATE BETANCUR SUPPORTED THE MILITARY DECLARATION. LIBERAL PARTY LEADERS WERE SILENT, HOWEVER, AN INDICATION OF THE PRESIDENT'S LACK OF SUPPORT IN THE PARTY AND OF A TENDENCY AMONG LIBERAL POLITICIANS TO DISCOUNT THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE MILITARY DECLARATION. END SUMMARY.

2. WHILE PRESIDENT LOPEZ HAS NOT YET REPLIED DIRECTLY TO THE MILITARY DECLARATION, DECEMBER 21 BOGOTA PRESS CARRIES A RESPONSE BY LOPEZ TO A REQUEST BY FORMER DEVELOPMENT MINISTER RAMIREZ
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OCAMPO FOR EMERGENCY SECURITY MEASURES, WHICH SEEMS A TACIT RESPONSE TO THE GENERALS.

3. IN HIS REPLY TO RAMIREZ, LOPEZ STATED THAT HE MUST ADHERE TO THE LAWS, THAT EMERGENCY MEASURES UNDER THE LAW HAVE ALREADY BEEN TAKEN BY THE PROCLAMATION OF A STATE OF SIEGE. LOPEZ REFERRED TO A PROMISE, EXPRESSED IN HIS DECEMBER 16 SPEECH TO THE CLOSING

SESSION OF CONGRESS, THAT HE WOULD SOON CREATE A UNIFIED LAW ENFORCEMENT BODY TO COMBAT KIDNAPPINGS AND THE DRUG TRAFFIC. HE POINTED OUT THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD PROPOSED A LAW TO THAT EFFECT, WHICH WAS NOT PASSED, THAT PRESIDENT CARTER HAD PRAISED IN A LETTER TO LOPEZ. PRESIDENT LPEZ CLOSED BY REITERATING THAT HE WAS ALWAYS READY TO RECEIVE SUGGESTIONS ON ANTI CRIME MEASURES AS LONG AS THEY WERE FAITHFUL TO THE RULE OF LAW.

4. THE LEAD EDITORIAL IN THE DECEMBER 21 EL TIEMPO WHICH OFTER VOICES LOPEZ' VIEWS, PRAISED THE ARMED FORCES AND SYMPATHIZED WITH THEIR CONCERN OVER THEIR HONOR, BUT CAUTIONED THEM AGAINST ATTEMPTING TO LAY DOWN A LINE OF CONDUCT FOR THE SUPREME COURT. THE EDITORIAL ASSURED THE MILITARY THAT UNJUST ATTACKS DID NOT AFFECT THE DIGNITY OF THE ARMED FORCES AND POINTED OUT THAT, IN ANY EVENT, LEGAL SOLUTIONS EXISTED TO PUNISH SLANDER.

5. CONSERVATIVE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE BELISARIO BETANCUR AND THE PRO GOVERNMENT CONSERVATIVE DAILY EL SIGLO GAVE UNQUALIFIED PRAISE AND SUPPORT TO THE MILITARY DECLARATION WHILE LIBERAL PARTY PRE CANDIDATES CARLOS LLERAS AND JULIO CESAR TURBAY, AND OTHER LIBER PARTY LEADERS WERE SILENT.

6. COMMENT: IT SEEMS UNLIKELY THAT LOPEZ WILL FAIL TO REPLY DIRECTLY TO THE MILITARY DECLARATION. HE WILL PROBABLY DO THIS IN HIS CUSTOMARY YEAR END ADDRESS TO THE NATION ON DECEMBER 30. THE THRUST OF HIS EVENTUAL REPLY IS PROBABLY CONFIDENTIAL

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ALREADY INDICATED IN HIS RESPONSE TO RAMIREZ AND IN EL TIEMPO'S EDITORIAL. THE SIGNIFICANT ABSENCE SO FAR OF ANY DECLARATIONS IN SUPPORT OF PRESIDENT LOPEZ BY LIBERAL PARTY LEADERS IS A MEASURE OF LOPEZ' LACK OF SUPPORT AND AUTHORITY IN THE PARTY AND, PROBABLY, OF AN APPARENTLY WIDESPREAD TENDENCY NOT TO INTERPRET THE MILITARY'S DECLARATION AS THE HARBINGER OF A SERIOUS THREAT OF A MILITARY TAKEOVER.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL MILITARY RELATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 21-Dec-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977BOGOTA11907
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770476-0598
Format: TEL
From: BOGOTA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19771233/aaaabbkd.tel
Line Count: 102
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: df3616ff-c188-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 BOGOTA 11828
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 11-Jan-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 162903
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: REACTIONS TO MILITARY DECLARATION
TAGS: PINT, MILI, CO
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbs://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/df3616ff-c188-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009